

Dear Members of the Health & Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Constanza Segovia, and I write on behalf of Hartford Deportation Defense (HDD) / Colectivo de Defensa de Hartford, an immigrant-led immigrant rights group based in Hartford with members and leaders coming from many countries and life experiences. HDD stands in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS because it would be an important step forward in getting health care access for our whole immigrant community.

Hartford Deportation Defense is a mutual aid group made up of mothers, fathers, youth, neighbors, immigrants, and non-immigrants that all join together in mutual support of each other, fighting for a more just society. We envision a world where all of our families can live with dignity and respect without the fear of deportation hanging over their heads, where all of us are free to move, live, and thrive in the communities that we want to live in and where all of us have access to the resources that we need regardless of our immigration status.

Unfortunately, one of the biggest barriers that prevents our members from being able to live in this world we described is our lack of access to quality healthcare. You will hear many of our members testify today, sharing their stories and speaking their truth about how the healthcare system has failed them. You will hear about parents that are afraid that their kids will get sick and they won't be able to afford the care. You will hear about Hartford residents who are using up everything they have saved to pay for medical bills, or are in constant stress because of thousands of dollars in medical bills that they are just unable to pay. You will hear from community members with chronic conditions that have not been able to get proper treatment and suffer emergencies that did not have to happen. You will hear about the constant stress, the anxiety, the fear, the trauma, much of it because undocumented immigrants are not able to access health insurance in the state of Connecticut.

Many of our members that are testifying are parents. In their stories, you will hear them always talk about the health of their children first. You will hear them set aside their own health in order to make sure their children get the support that they need. We know that parents are willing to do anything for their children. However, that sentiment should not include suffering every day, worrying every day simply because our government prevents them from accessing the health care that they deserve. Parents deserve quality care, single adults deserve quality care, children deserve quality care, everyone in our community deserves quality care. That is why we are advocating strongly for this bill to pass while also urging this committee to continue revisiting this issue until we achieve HUSKY coverage for ALL undocumented CT residents who are income-eligible.

Having one accident or suffering from a chronic condition should not mean that you have to go into thousands of dollars of medical debt. Due to the lack of health insurance access of our members, we as an organization are in the process of setting up a private fundraising campaign and applying for

grants to support our members with getting the care we need. We are doing this because this truly is a life or death issue. People die because they cannot afford the care they need or because they are denied care due to lacking insurance. The funds raised will never be enough to help everyone because health care is so expensive but we have to do something. We don't want our members to die or suffer more because the government refuses to grant them access to health insurance. You have the opportunity to change this reality in part by supporting SB 284.

This bill is also about race, class, and who we see as part of our country and our community. The State of Connecticut, the Governor, and many in the Legislature say they want to tackle issues related to racial equity, and issues related to the wellbeing of Connecticut young people. This is your chance. A vast majority of the uninsured population in this state are black, brown, undocumented, and low-income. Expanding access to HUSKY is a racial and economic justice issue.

We envision a world where our members can live free from fear, free from discrimination, and be able not just to live but to thrive. We like to think that many of you here today want the same thing for all of Connecticut's residents. We urge you to support S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS and to continue advocating for health equity policies that include ALL Connecticut residents, regardless of their immigration status.

Sincerely,

Constanza Segovia
Hartford Deportation Defense